

Leake Chancery Court latest to adopt e-filing

April 10, 2015

The Chancery Court of Leake County will begin accepting voluntary electronic filing of court records on April 14. E-filing will become mandatory on May 4, according to an order signed by Chancery Judge Cynthia Brewer.

With the implementation in Leake County Chancery Court, e-filing will be used across the entire 11th Chancery District that also includes Holmes, Madison and Yazoo counties. Madison County was the original pilot test site for development of the Mississippi Electronic Courts system. Madison Chancery went to voluntary e-filing in July 2009.

E-filing of court records allows judges and attorneys to file and view documents 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and makes public access to court records more convenient. The MEC system is adapted from the electronic filing system used in federal district courts. MEC technology and training are provided free to counties. The only cost to local courts is computer hardware and Internet access.

Senior Chancery Judge Cynthia Brewer, whose office is in Canton, said that she looks forward to the quicker filing of orders, better access to court files and improved efficiency of district-wide e-filing. It's not unusual for her to hear a matter, particularly in an emergency, in a different county from where the case was filed. Relying on a paper filing system means files and documents have to be transported by hand or mailed.

"With the responsibility to hear cases in multiple counties, it is fundamental that we have access to records for matters such as emergency pleadings that may come up in another county. This avoids delay in waiting for records to be faxed or transported," Judge Brewer said. "I can sit in any court and access the records, so I don't have to ask the attorneys to stop by the clerk's office to pick up the file. I don't have to mail orders back to the clerk's office. Now they can be scanned."

Judge Brewer said, "Using the common technology within the district will only improve the efficiency of our district. It is a complement to each of our Chancery Clerks within the district that we will now be united in the technology aspect of court records and accessibility of court records, not only for the court and the staff but for the public."

"Chancery Clerk Dot Merchant and her staff are participating actively in training provided by Mississippi Electronic Courts," Judge Brewer said. She encourages attorneys who practice in Leake County to take advantage of the MEC training.

Free training in how to use the MEC system will be offered April 23 at 9 a.m. and 1 p.m. at the Gartin Justice Building, 450 High Street in Jackson. The training will be held in the first floor training room.

About 5,000 attorneys, more than half of the attorneys who practice in Mississippi, are registered to use the MEC system. MEC also has more than 2,000 non-attorney registered users who can access court records via the Internet.

Lawyers who practice in federal courts will adapt easily to the state court e-filing system, said MEC Business Analyst Lakisha Jones-Clay, who helped build and test the original pilot system when she was a Madison County deputy chancery clerk. The MEC training staff is available to help attorneys unfamiliar with e-filing to learn the system.

The link to the Leake County Chancery portal is at <https://leake.chancery.mec.ms.gov>. The MEC Helpdesk is at helpdesk@mec.ms.gov.

The public has easier access to court records via MEC. However, some public files, such as those in divorce cases, are not accessible via the Internet to anyone other than the attorneys directly involved in the litigation. Those public files may be viewed in the office of the Chancery Clerk.

Leake Chancery Court's move to e-filing will bring the total number of e-filing trial courts to 27. The implementation of voluntary e-filing on April 20 in Wayne County Chancery Court will

make 28 participating trial courts. The MEC program, under the supervision of the Mississippi Supreme Court, is utilized in 16 counties. Wayne County will bring the number to 17.

Other e-filing trial courts include the Chancery Courts in DeSoto, Grenada, Holmes, Lauderdale, Lowndes, Montgomery, Oktibbeha, Webster and Yazoo counties; Chancery and Circuit Courts in Clay County; and all trial courts – Chancery, Circuit and County Courts – in Madison, Harrison, Hinds, Rankin and Warren counties. The Mississippi Supreme Court and Court of Appeals also utilize e-filing.

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